

Centers of Excellence for Teacher Training: A Summit of the Americas Initiative

Design Group Meeting Report

Central American CETT

Basic Education and Policy Support (BEPS) Activity

Contract No. HNE-I-00-00-00038-00

Work Order #20: Human Resources Improvement Policies

June 6, 2002

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May 29-31, 2002

Miami, Florida

Background

On April 18, 2002 ministry of education (MOE) officials from Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Guatemala, the Dominican Republic and Mexico, together with representatives of eight institutions from Central America, the Dominican Republic and Mexico, met to discuss the development of the Centers of Excellence for Teacher Training (CETT) in Central America that the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) is implementing. This group of representatives of Central American governments and institutions agreed to designate a smaller group, which met May 29-31 in Miami, Florida, to decide on a framework for the program, including design and coordination elements of the CETT. This smaller design group worked to assure maximum benefit to all countries of the region, while holding in consideration existing needs and capacities. Agreements from the May 29-31 meeting were to be sent to the larger April 18 meeting group for review by all government and institution representatives involved.

Participants

This design meeting took place in Miami, with the following representatives nominated at the prior (April 18) meeting in attendance: Elia del Cid de Andrade, Vice Minister of Education in Honduras, designated at the April 18 meeting to represent MOEs; Roberto Moreno of Del Valle University of Guatemala (UVG); Ramón Salgado of the National Pedagogical University Francisco Morazán (UPN) in Honduras; Joaquín Samayoa of the Business Foundation for Educational Development (FEPADE) in El Salvador; Radhames Mejia of the Pontifical Catholic University Mother and Teacher (PUCMM) in the Dominican Republic and Jorge Durán of the Latin American Institute of Educational Communication (ILCE), an international organization in Mexico. Juan José Serrato, of the Public Education Secretariat (SEP) of Mexico, attended due to the government of Mexico's interest in supporting the CETT program.

David Evans, Barbara Knox-Seith and Evelyn Rodriguez-Perez attended from USAID in Washington, D.C. Don Graybill, Antonieta Harwood, MaryFaith Mount-Cors and Asunción Sanz attended from Creative Associates International, Inc. Alan Hurwitz facilitated the meeting.

Process

The two and a half day meeting was organized to include the following activities:

- Review of USAID's objectives, goals and parameters for the CETT program.
- Identification and analysis of institutional capacities required for program success.
- Analysis of capacities of participating institutions.
- Definition and assignment of areas of responsibility and roles in the program.
- Review and definition of the operating structure of the CETT.
- Identification of necessary steps to develop a proposal for the CETT.
- Establishment of a timetable for developing a proposal.

The Central American CETT will have the following three active components:

- Development of diagnostic tools for teachers.
- Development of materials.
- Development of training for teachers in techniques on how to teach students to read, including a manual with pedagogical methods for this goal.

And the following two helping components:

- Applied research, including the goal of collecting best practices and techniques as they are used. All the materials and teaching tools would be based on ongoing testing and assessment of teaching methods.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) to distribute the product and use appropriate technology to reach all beneficiaries, including electronic technology, videos and printed materials.

In the case of Central America, another component to be included is:

- Social marketing to focus attention on creating the political will to address reading problems.

Another part of the program is the participation of the private sector. The CETT program has \$20 million from the U.S. government for the three hemispheric Centers of Excellence and plans to complement this sum with \$20 million from the private sector.

USAID hopes to achieve the following outputs from the program:

- Training would be provided to 15,000 teachers across the Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) region, with an impact on 1,000,000 children. Approximately 7 percent of teachers in the LAC region would receive training. In Central America, 6,000 teachers would receive training.
- Each teacher would receive a manual with strategies for how to teach reading. This manual would also address issues of: classroom management, child-centered teaching techniques, diagnosis of student reading problems and teaching strategies in a multigrade classroom. Innovative reading instruction methods would be also be made available to teachers through the Web and videos.
- Some number of school directors and administrators would receive training so that they could support the professional development of teachers and the use of CETT materials in the classroom.

USAID parameters for the CETT program in Central America:

Non-negotiable conditions for the program include:

1. The focus of the program is reading in the early primary grades.
2. The program priority is improving teachers' classroom practices, not strengthening institutions. For this reason, impact indicators and program evaluation must focus on teachers and students. Nonetheless, the program will have an impact on the institutions that participate.
3. The organizational structure must be managerially efficient and cost effective so that resources reach the classroom.
4. The program must have a pan-subregional vision, with a design that benefits all the countries of the subregion.
5. The program must have a participatory process.
6. USAID is the final arbiter of the program plan.
7. The institution with whom USAID contracts for the program must be Central American, not Mexican or Dominican.

USAID preferences and recommendations for the program:

1. Build on existing capacity. Work with existing strengths and support current reform efforts.

2. Start small and expand after positive results are demonstrated.
3. Work with innovative programs, innovative schools and change agents. Work with those who have demonstrated a commitment to making a change in this area.
4. Build on the analytical work that has been done and other inputs already received. This work forms the basis for decision making.
5. Make a grant to one institution with a pass-through to other institutions and determine a scope of work for each organization working on this program. Each institution would have a budget associated with this program, but the money would pass through to each institution through the institution who signs the contract with USAID. The formation of a consortium would not be viable from an administrative point of view; it is more efficient for USAID to work with one institution directly. (The coordinating institution will distribute funds without charging overhead on the budgets of the other institutions working on the program.)
7. Mix and match institutions to find the constellation of institutions that will do the best job. Participation in this meeting does not guarantee a leadership role in the program.
8. Choose an institution with a pan-Central American perspective, with the capacity to coordinate all of the countries of Central America, the Dominican Republic and Mexico.
9. Design a program with flexibility and creativity to deal with difficulties that come along the way.

Points to consider:

1. The program will focus on serving rural, disadvantaged students and would like to use ICT to distribute materials and deliver services. Strategies must take into consideration the appropriateness of using ICT to reach this population, which often has very poor access to technology.
2. The design of the program must create a win-win situation, while at the same time valuing efficiency in the management model. It is necessary to concentrate on every institution winning, not in how much each is winning.
3. The time pressure for this program must be considered. The funding is available currently. USAID would like to explore a grant as a step toward eventually signing a cooperative agreement. During the first year of funding, the model could be developed. The second-year funding would be contingent on completion of a detailed implementation plan.

The design group agreed on the following points:

1. The contracting process will consist of one institution signing a cooperative agreement with USAID. This coordinating institution will subcontract with the rest of the institutions, which have responsibilities in specific areas of activity for CETT (see #6 below for designated areas of responsibility).
2. The Center of Excellence will function as a consortium, with a coordinating institution and others responsible for specific components as part of the production level, complemented by institutions in each of the program's beneficiary countries.
3. In order to ensure the participation of all of the countries of the region in the Central American CETT, an institution in each country will be selected to participate as a national center which will deliver services and materials produced for CETT.
4. Institutions will participate in CETT at two levels: at the production level and at the delivery level. The production level will involve a group of institutions with capacities in specific areas of responsibility. This production group of institutions will then coordinate with institutions serving as national centers to deliver materials and training.
5. The coordinating institution should have the following characteristics: the ability to work within the USAID parameters, leadership in academia and in teacher training, political support within the government for the initiative, managerial efficiency, regional perspective, commitment to serving regional above national interests, capacity to coordinate different institutions, commitment to the participative focus of the program, experience in management of international funds, capacity to guarantee pass-through funds, commitment to developing technical expertise in reading instruction for early primary-school teachers, favorable country positioning to contribute to the program, capacity to serve as a change agent and stability of the government and the institution.

Based on the criteria mentioned above, the areas of work to be developed for CETT and the capacities, interest and comparative added value of institutions, the meeting participants agreed that UPN in Honduras would be the coordinating entity for the Central American CETT.

6. The design group identified eleven areas of responsibility for the Central American CETT: links with U.S. institutions, coordination with MOEs, ICT, social marketing, program coordination and finances, private-sector partnering, diagnosis and assessment of student reading problems and performance, evaluation and monitoring of program progress, applied research (including philosophy and strategy) and materials and teacher training (including methods and content).

A matrix in Annex 1 shows which institutions are designated to be responsible (Rs) or to participate (Ps) in each area. The Rs are accountable for obtaining results, providing leadership in the assigned task, adjusting themselves to the desired objectives and facilitating exchange and communication among the Ps. In the areas in which Ps have experience, they will contribute their resources and expertise.

The Rs will be: UPN (program coordination and finances, private-sector partnering, evaluation—methods and content); ILCE (ICT); UVG (diagnosis and evaluation of student performance, applied research—philosophy and strategy); PUCMM (materials), national centers (coordination with MOEs, social marketing and private-sector partnering.) USAID is responsible for creating and maintaining links with U.S. institutions.

7. USAID requested that the group of institutions elaborate a plan of coordination for the first year of the program. During this first year, activities would be based on planning and coordinating the consortium institutions and countries, as well as the development of a detailed program design. If countries and institutions find that this planning process can be completed in less than a year, the CETT program can be executed earlier than anticipated under this schedule.

8. Representatives of the institutions and MOEs at this meeting reconfirmed that the MOEs in each of the eight countries involved in the Central American CETT will have an advisory role rather than a direct management role in the program.

9. An executive committee will be formed, made up of representatives from UPN, Rs, FEPADE and USAID. This committee will determine a framework for implementation of the program.

10. A coordination committee will also be organized of program directors at the national centers in each of the eight countries involved in the Central American CETT, along with representatives of Rs, Ps, MOEs and USAID.

Next Steps:

<i>Steps</i>	<i>Responsible Party</i>	<i>Date</i>
Meeting report for distribution	CAII	6/7
Proposal framework to involved parties	USAID	6/7
Draft of conceptual framework	UPN	6/14
Meeting in Miami Agreements on conceptual framework and plan	Designated group	6/26-27
Draft of individual components for proposal	Institutions responsible for specific components	7/15
Final proposal written	UPN	7/31

Annex 1: Institutions and Areas of Responsibility

P=Participation, R=Responsibility

Institutions/ Areas of responsibility	P U C M M	F E P A D E	U P N	U V G	I L C E	MOE CECC &SEP (in Mex)	USAID	National Centers
1.Links with U.S. institutions			p				R	
2.Coordination with MOEs			P			P	P	R
3.ICT	P				R			P
4.Social marketing						P	P	R
5.Program coordination and finances		P	R	P	P			
6.Private-sector partnering		P	R		P		P	R
7.Diagnosis and assessment of student reading problems and performance	P		P	R		P		
8.Evaluation and monitoring of program progress	P	P	R	P		P	P	P
9.Applied research (philosophy and strategy)		P	P	R	P			
10. Materials	R		P	P	P	P (SEP)		
11.Teacher training (methods and content)	P	P	R	P	P	P		P